



The River Review

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Presented by the Paralyzed Veterans of America and the Department of Veterans Affairs

Photo Courtesy of Spokane Regional CVB/Alan Bisson

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Veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan Speak Out

Competition so far this week has been full of challenge and excitement. One group that has definitely hit the ground running with eagerness and verve is the Veterans of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF). For the past five years, the number of OEF and OIF Veterans attending the Wheelchair Games has continued to grow, as more and more Veterans are introduced to VA's annual rehabilitation events through friends, family and VA therapists. These athletes

Deborah Dones



come to challenge themselves both physically and mentally and to learn from others who have shared some of the same experiences.

One such participant is Deborah

Dones, an OIF Veteran from Carolina, P.R. Coming from a military family, Dones followed her uncle and grandfather into the Army in 2000, going into the Chemical Corps. An avid volleyball player before her accident, Dones hasn't let her wheelchair slow her down. "I don't care that I'm in a wheelchair," she says. "I'm an active person." At home, she still participates in numerous sports activities and teaches high school science. This year is her fourth time at the Games, competing in the field events as well as bowling and air guns. Dones says the

secret to her success has been keeping a good attitude. "No matter what kind of injury you have, you have the opportunity to stay on the Earth, to say thank you and do the best you can."

Another Veteran of OIF, Jeremiah Butler of Augusta, Ga., is attending the Games for the first time. Though he found out about the Wheelchair Games the first year he was injured, it's only this year that Butler has been able to make the trip to participate. Butler has looked forward to meeting new people who share many of his same experiences. "It is like a big party with people you can relate to," he said.

With so many OEF and OIF Veterans ready to jump in and compete this year, (more than 25 OEF/OIF Veterans are competing this week) the 29th National Veterans Wheelchair Games is another one for the records. In typical Games fashion, our other athletes have not been shy about introducing themselves to our newest generation of heroes. Their stories, like every Veteran here, will inspire you and remind you that the Games aren't just about winning gold medals — they are about sportsmanship and the camaraderie of some truly amazing people.



Jeremiah Butler



FINALS ARE TODAY!

Be sure to watch today's championship basketball, quad rugby and power soccer games in Riverside A beginning at 7 p.m. Cheer for your fellow athletes and your favorite teams as they go for the silver and gold medals in today's finals. The consolation game for basketball (which determines the final two

teams going for the gold) is at 7 p.m. Quad rugby finals are at 8 p.m., along with power soccer and basketball. The finals for all of these events are full of excitement, so get your clapping hands together and your cheering voice in tune as we find out which teams will go home with what color medals! See you there.



VA's Six National Rehabilitation Special Events

For more than 20 years, the Department of Veterans Affairs has sponsored four national rehabilitation special events for our nation's Veterans. In 2008, two additional programs were added to this roster. All of these annual national programs promote the healing of both body and spirit as they motivate eligible Veterans to reach their full potential, improve their independence, achieve a healthier lifestyle and enjoy a higher quality of life overall. Each year, VA presents or co-presents these programs for U.S. military Veterans served by VA medical facilities nationwide.

The **National Veterans Wheelchair Games** has grown to become the largest annual wheelchair sports competition in the world. This week, Veterans are competing in 17 different sports while improving upon the rehabilitation they receive back home. While past Games have produced national and world-class champions, the Games also provide opportunities for newly disabled Veterans to gain skills and be exposed to other wheelchair athletes.

Previously a local program, the now **National Veterans TEE Tournament** provides legally blind and eligible disabled Veterans an opportunity to develop new skills and strengthen their self-esteem through adaptive golf, bowling and other events. Each year, the TEE Tournament uses a therapeutic format to promote rehabilitation, fellowship and camaraderie among participants. The event takes place in Coralville, Iowa from September 6-10 this year.

VA's newest national program, the **National Veterans Summer Sports Clinic**, promotes rehabilitation of body and spirit by teaching summer sporting activities to Veterans with significant physical or psychological impairments. The Clinic offers such sports as surfing, sailing, track and field, kayaking and cycling to newly injured Veterans. This year's event takes place in San Diego the week of September 20-25.

The only non-sports related national program is the **National Veterans Creative Arts Festival**, which will take place in San Antonio, Texas later this fall. This annual program is the culmination of talent competitions in art, creative writing, dance,

drama and music for Veterans treated in the VA's national health care system. Each year, around 120 Veterans exhibit their artwork or perform musical, dance, dramatic or original writing selections in an awesome variety show. All Veterans invited to participate are selected winners of year-long, national fine arts talent competitions in which thousands of Veterans enter, from VA medical facilities across the nation.

The **National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic** takes place in Snowmass Village, Colo. each year and is the world leader in promoting rehabilitation by instructing Veterans with various disabilities in adaptive Alpine and Nordic skiing. For many newly injured Veterans, the Clinic provides their first experience in winter sports and gives them the inspiration to take their rehabilitation to a higher level.

Life begins at 55! At least it does for more than 600 Veterans competing in the **National Veterans Golden Age Games**, the premier senior adaptive rehabilitation program in the United States. It is the only national multi-event sports and recreational seniors' competition program designed to improve the quality of life for all older Veterans, including those with a wide range of abilities and disabilities. The program offers 14 different sports and recreational activities and was a huge success last month when this year's event was held in Birmingham, Ala.

For more information about any of VA's national sports programs and special events, visit the VA Web site at: <http://www1.va.gov/opa/speceven/index.asp>



A Look Back...



VA Secretary Erik Shinseki (standing in back); (left to right in front) Doug Beckley, associate sports director, PVA; and Tom Brown, director of the National Veterans Wheelchair Games

Wheelchair Games National Director, Tom Brown, who was a recreational therapist at the Richmond VA Medical Center at the time. That year, 74 Veterans from 14 states participated in seven sporting events that included track, field, table tennis, billiards, swimming, weightlifting and slalom. As word spread about the Games during the first few years, attendance numbers steadily increased.

By 1985, attendance had nearly quadrupled. With the numbers consistently rising, complexity of the event increased and the resources needed to put on the Games became a daunting challenge for the VA Medical Centers hosting the program. As most of the athletes

Evidence of the enormous success of the National Veterans Wheelchair Games is obvious when you look around and see more than 500 wheelchair athletes ready for another year. From its humble beginnings, it's easy to see just how far this event has come.

The origins of wheelchair sports began after WWII, when young disabled Veterans began playing wheelchair basketball in VA hospitals throughout the U.S. This interest spread to other sports, such as track and field, swimming, and archery, and led to the formation of several associations devoted to new and innovative wheelchair sports.

In 1980, the Department of Veterans Affairs established a Recreation Therapy Service to recognize the continued therapeutic success that wheelchair sports were having on Veterans with disabilities. Since then, VA therapists have used wheelchair sports as a therapeutic tool for treating Veterans whose disabilities require the use of a wheelchair.

The first official National Veterans Wheelchair Games was held at the VA Medical Center in Richmond, Va. in 1981, to commemorate the "International Year of Disabled Persons." It was co-founded by three individuals including the current



"Dr. Daniel Scott, Medical Director of the Wheelchair Games, is a staff physician at the VA Eastern Colorado Health Care System in Denver. Here's what he and his team have to say about today's topic."



Q ~ During the Games, the athletes put forth lots of physical effort. What should we do to make sure we recover properly? – Wondering in Washington

A ~ Rest is one of the most important aspects of doing well in sports. It allows your body to recover from the rigors of competition. Sleep can account for up to 40 percent of rest and recovery after competition, and at least eight hours a night is recommended. Another key component to rest and recovery is warming up before and cooling down after competing.

Why warm-up?

A pre-exercise warm-up:

- warms your muscles by increasing the movement of blood through your tissues, making the muscles more supple;
- increases delivery of oxygen and nutrients to your muscles by increasing the blood flow to them;
- prepares your muscles for stretching;
- prepares your heart for an increase in activity;
- prepares you mentally for the upcoming exercise; and
- primes your nerve-to-muscle pathways to be ready for exercise.

To make your warm-up effective, you need to do movements that increase your heart rate and breathing, and slightly increase the temperature of your muscle tissue. A good indication is warming up to the point of raising a light sweat.

Why cool-down?

Cooling down after exercise means slowing down your level of activity gradually. The cool-down process:

- helps your heart rate and breathing return to normal gradually;
- helps avoid fainting or dizziness;
- helps prepare your muscles for the next exercise session, whether it's later that day or a few days later; and
- helps remove waste products from your muscles, such as lactic acid, which can build up during vigorous activity.

For an effective cool-down, perform low intensity exercise for a minimum of five to 10 minutes, followed by stretching which helps relax your muscles, restores them to their resting length and improves flexibility.

Allow 10 minutes of thorough post-exercise stretching for every one hour of exercise. Stretch each major muscle group for 20 to 30 seconds, two to three times.

Being well-nourished is also crucial to recovery. After periods of physical activity, you have a window of 20 to 30 minutes when the body should begin refueling for muscle recovery to get you ready for the next competition, such as half a peanut butter sandwich, some milk or yogurt and some fruit.

Most importantly, stay hydrated when competing and remember to have fun!

Dr. Dan - (Today's Ghostwriter: Paul Ross)



"Looking Back," cont'd from page 2

participating in the event were paralyzed veterans, the Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA) offered to become a co-sponsor. Since the formation of this partnership, PVA's corporate sponsor program has been instrumental in funding many aspects of the Games for the increasing number of competitors. The variety of sports offered also increased.

Now in its 29th year, the Games continue to expand and flourish with more than 500 athletes participating from 42 states, Puerto Rico and Great Britain this week.

"Never did we dream that 29 years later the Games would still be in existence, or become as big as they are today," said Brown. "We are delighted that the Games are still providing the Veteran with the opportunity to recapture abilities and skills that they may have felt were lost after their injury or illness."

The continued efforts of VA and PVA have led to the latest addition of new medal events, the most recent including power soccer, handcycling and trapshooting. A category for standing competitors in table tennis and archery has also been added, for those athletes wishing to compete using their prostheses, particularly newly injured Veterans who served in Iraq and Afghanistan.

"The Games have kept up with the changing technology and new sports that the technological supports," Brown explained.

New developments in prosthetics, as well as advances in wheelchair equipment, have helped make competition safer and more comfortable. Many competitors work with

coaches or train on teams in their local areas to help master the different equipment required for certain events and better prepare themselves for the Games.



The success of the National Veterans Wheelchair Games has become a source of hope and pride for the Veterans participating. This event continues to be shaped and molded to help meet the demands and changing needs of the athletes, while also accommodating ongoing technological advances. The Games continue to be something that many Veterans look forward to each year and remain visible proof that, despite life's many challenges, anything is possible.





Friday, July 17



Friday's Meal Hours SCC, Ballroom 100 A/B/C	
Breakfast	6 - 8 a.m.
Lunch	10:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.
Dinner	4:30 - 6:30 p.m.

Breakfast

Scrambled eggs, hash brown potatoes, bacon, sausage, grilled ham, biscuits & gravy, oatmeal, cold cereal, fresh fruit, muffins, Danish, fresh juice, coffee, hot tea and milk

Today's Option:

Pancakes with syrup

Lunch - Offsite at Spokane Falls Community College

Catered by the Longhorn Barbeque

Dinner

Fresh salad bar (lettuce, cherry tomatoes, cheddar cheese, croutons, sunflower seeds, beets, assorted beans), potato salad, fresh vegetables, dinner rolls, assorted desserts, coffee, iced tea with lemons and milk

Today's Option:

Baked Cod or Dinner Tri-Tip Steak and Parsley Buttered Potatoes

Meals for the Games end Saturday at lunch.

Those receiving complimentary meals will use a debit card issued by the Spokane Convention Center (SCC). The cards are loaded daily with a balance of \$30 for today and \$26 Saturday. Any amount not used will be zeroed out at the end of the day. Debit cards can be used at the concession stands or in the Games cafeteria located in SCC, Ballroom 100 A/B/C.

SCC concession stands are located in the back of Group Health Exhibit A and in Riverside Hall D. Food available includes: muffins, Danish, bagels, cookies, soft drinks, juice, coffee, yogurt, milk, pretzels, nachos, french fries, bratwurst, German sausage, hamburgers, grilled chicken breasts, deli sandwiches, chef salad and kettle chips.

Please watch *The River Review* daily for more information on the daily menu and the meal exceptions today and Saturday.

Before You Depart ...

Please make sure that you turn in the debit cards you've been using for your meals. Drop-off boxes will be available after the lunch meal on tomorrow, July 18, as well as at the Closing Banquet.

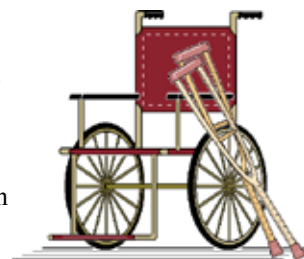


Don't leave the Games without your memorabilia items! Visit Convention Center, Room 103 for fantastic hats, towels, sports bags, mugs, water bottles, shirts and more.

Durable Medical Equipment (DME) Return

How easy can we make this for you? Just leave it in your hotel room!

We've already made arrangements to come by and pick it up after you've checked out. Just make sure that the room you're leaving it in is the same room you filled out on the sheet when you signed for your equipment.



Medical suites are located at the **Doubletree Hotel Room 1102 and Davenport Towers Room 2170**. They open daily at 7 a.m. and will close tomorrow, July 18 at 10:30 p.m.

For athletes staying at the Courtyard by Marriott, Fairfield Inn, Oxford Suites or TraveLodge, medical assistance will be available nightly from 11:30 p.m. to 7:30 a.m. If an athlete has a medical emergency during this time, call the hotel operator and they will communicate with the physician on-call. At other times Veterans should go to the medical suites located at the Doubletree, Davenport Towers or at the Spokane Convention Center (SCC).

The **medical suite at the SCC** opens daily at 7 a.m. until the last event at the SCC has ended each day. In the case of a life-threatening emergency, please have the hotel operator call 911.

Only registered athletes or registered volunteers on duty may be treated by Games' medical staff. A list of local emergency clinics and hospitals will be available for family members who need medical assistance.

Wheelchair Repair

The Wheelchair Repair Shop is located at the Doubletree Hotel Suite B and is open from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. through tomorrow, July 18. Hours will be extended as necessary. Service for minor repairs will be available at the Spokane Convention Center and all off-site venues from 8 a.m., through the end of the final event. Wheelchair repair will also be present at the airport at departure times. If you need emergency wheelchair repair after hours, please call 993-6242.

Awards Presentation Schedule

Medals will be awarded in two ways:

1. For Team events with a clear first, second and third place, medals will be awarded at the venue immediately after the competition.

Awards will be presented immediately upon completion for the following events: Super G, Power Soccer, Basketball, Quad Rugby and Softball.

2. For events that require the results to be tabulated, medal presentations will be delayed. Medals for these events will be presented in the Convention Center, Riverside D, on the following dates and times. Once results are confirmed, they will be posted on the TV monitors located in the Convention Center.



Awards Schedule

Friday, July 17	9:30 a.m. - 10 p.m.
Saturday, July 18	11 a.m. - 5 p.m.

The National Veterans Wheelchair Games bring together wheelchair athletes from all over the nation (and beyond), representing all branches of the military service. Take the time to meet as many as you can. Here is a little information about six of your fellow competitors at this week's Games. Take time to look them up, since they all are "Someone You Should Know." Today's column focuses on Veterans from different periods of service.



WW II: A self described "Dennis the Menace," Wayne Field, is known for being a prankster and at 83, still enjoys an adventure. Field, from Colorado Springs, Colo.,

is a combat-wounded Veteran who served in the European Theatre. This is his 17th consecutive Wheelchair Games, and he also participates in the National Veterans Golden Age Games. "I have competed in the Wheelchair Games each year since 1993," said Field. "Competing gives me the incentive to exercise regularly, which is good for the body, mind and spirit." He competed this week in the swimming events and has earned more than 250 medals for swimming throughout the years.



Korean War: Navy Veteran Rick King, of Burien, Wash., served in combat during the Korean War and is competing in the Wheelchair Games for the fourth time. He was injured in

a fall in 1999. "I've been a party to the Games on three occasions and met many comrades in arms," said King. "The competition is fair and balanced and I've been hoping to see some old friends and meet new ones. Hooray for all competitors and good wishes for both expertise and luck!" King is competing in nine-ball, bowling, archery, air guns and trapshooting this week.



Vietnam War: Frank Lopez de Victoria, 64, from Clearwater, Fla., is a combat Veteran of the Navy and performed several jobs aboard aircraft carriers. Years later,

after surgery was unable to correct back injuries he sustained in service, he experienced depression about being disabled until his nephew and fellow competitor, Orlando Perez, brought him to a training session for the Puerto Rican team. He said, "When I'm training, I forget about my pains - training keeps me young." Now, he likes to give back and encourages others to participate in the Games, especially the younger Veterans who have dubbed him "Uncle Frank." His advice is, "Work hard and don't listen to the people who tell you that you can't do it. With a little work you can succeed!"



Gulf War: As a first-time competitor, Jenny Pena, 50, strives to be the best in everything she does. She discovered the Games through a friend and has looked forward to the camaraderie that so many Veterans

experience at this event. Pena, who lives in Stone Mountain, Ga., is a combat Veteran who served in the Army and National Guard. She was injured while repelling from a helicopter during her service in the Persian Gulf. "I hope to succeed in my events," she said. "The Games have given me the opportunity for new challenges in athletics and to encourage other veterans to get involved." Pena has trained hard for her events. One of her goals is to learn to become more agile in her wheelchair and she hopes that the Games will help her achieve this.



Iraqi Freedom: Being competitive was always part of life for William Leavitt before he was injured, and finding the National Veterans Wheelchair Games has brought back his naturally competitive nature. Leavitt, 36, is a

combat Veteran of Iraq and he attended his first Wheelchair Games last year in his home city of Omaha, Neb. Since then, he has trained hard - five to six days a week for about four hours a day - to compete this year. Leavitt aspires to earn a spot on the 2010 U.S. Paralympic team to compete in weightlifting, his favorite event. He is also competing in basketball and the field events.



Enduring Freedom: Full of optimism and enthusiasm for the Games, there seems to be nothing that can keep down Elgin, Iowa's Loren Strong. Strong, 24, joined the Army National Guard and served for a year in Af-

ghanistan defending our country. In 2005, one month before he was to be released from the Guard, he was involved in a serious automobile accident, which left him a quadriplegic. Despite his injury, Strong competed in his first Wheelchair Games in 2006 and has come back every year since. "The Games help me overcome daily challenges and achieve the goals I aspire to reach," he said. Training for the Games keeps him focused in his everyday life and he looks forward to visiting new places each year.

Other Periods of Service: In addition to these major wars and conflicts, we also have Veterans here this week who served during Somalia, Grenada, Lebanon, the Pueblo Crisis, Northern Ireland, Malaysia and Borneo. Hundreds of Veterans also protected our nation during the Vietnam era and times of peace.

Share with your friends and family back home as you are *Roll'n on the River* in Spokane. Daily editions of *The River Review* are located on the main home page, and individual news releases and photos are located on the "Athlete Information" tab. Event results and other information are being updated through Saturday morning.